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Message Text

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22
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00

SAJ-01 NSC-05 DODE-00 /065 W
---------- 082117
R 021055Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9505
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 6647

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OCON, MILI, AWACS, NATO
SUBJ: DUTCH SUPPORT FOR NATO AEW

REF: STATE 285148 (DTG 192256Z NOV 76)

1. EMBASSY GENERALLY CONCURS WITH DESCRIPTION OF MORE POSITIVE DUTCH ATTITUDE TOWARD AEW GIVEN BY ADMIRAL BINNENDIJK, BUT BELIEVES HE MAY HAVE PAINTED A SOMEWHAT OPTIMISTIC PICTURE THAN IS FULLY JUSTIFIED AT MOMENT. WE ALSO QUESTION SOME FO REASONS HE GAVE FOR "EVOLUTION OF MORE FAVORABLE CLIMATE."

2. IT IS CLEAR THAT ATTITUDE IN THE HAGUE TOWARD DUTCH PARTICIPATION IN NATO AEW HAS SHIFTED IN RECENT MONTHS AWAY FROM PREVIOUS POSITION OF NEAR TOTAL REJECTION. EARLIER NEGATIVE ATTITUDE WAS CONDITIONED MAINLY ON BELIEF HERE, AMONG BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN EXPERTS AND POLITICIANS, THAT, BECAUSE OF HIGH COSTS, GON WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO AFFORD AWACS REGARDLESS OF ATTRACTIVENESS OF SYSTEM AND ACCEPTANCE OF IT AS A REAL NEED FOR ALLIANCE.
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3. AS REPORTED IN THE HAGUE 6484 (DTG 121428Z NOV 76),
THE MOOD IN HOLLAND CONCERNING OVERALL DEFENSE MATTERS WAS
SHOWN TO BE MORE POSITIVE DURING THE ANNUAL PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATE ON THE DEFENSE BUDGET. WHEREAS DISCUSSIONS ABOUT
POSSIBLE DEFENSE REDUCTIONS HAD COME TO BE EXPECTED DURING
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES IN RECENT YEARS, THERE WAS LITTLE OF
THAT THIS TIME. IF ANYTHING, MORE VOICES CALLING ON THE GOVERN-
MENT TO FIND ADDITIONAL MONEY FOR DEFENSE WERE TO BE HEARD.
IN ADDITION TO THIS GENERAL ATMOSPHERE, BUDGET MANAGERS IN
THE MOD SEEM TO HAVE A BIT MORE BREATHING ROOM THAN THEY
EXPECTED.

4. THE GON HAS STILL NOT ANNOUNCED HOW FAR IT IS PREPARED
TO GO IN CONTRIBUTING TO NATO AEW. HOWEVER, THE SUBJECT WAS
GIVEN A FULL AIRING BY THE DUTCH CABINET ON NOVEMBER 26.
ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES IN FOREIGN MINISTRY, MOD VREDELING'S
PRESENTATION, WHICH INCLUDED DEFENSE, FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND ECO-
NOMIC MINISTRIES INPUTS, WAS FAVORABLE RECEIVED. FOLLOWING
CABINET MEETING PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL TOLD PRESS TAHT GON
WILL TAKE PART IN STUDY OF AWACS. PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY
DOES NOT MEAN THAT HOLLAND WILL ALSO TAKE PART IN EVENTUAL
FINANCING AND PURCHASE OF THE NATO SYSTEMS HE SAID A DECISION
ON THAT WOULD BE TAKEN LATER. PRIME MINISTER ALSO TOLD PRESS THAT
A POSSIBLE PURCHASE WOULD BE RELATED TO TASK DIVISION WITHIN
THE ALLIANCE. ONE MFA OFFICIAL FOLLOWING AWACS HAS TOLD US
HE VIEWS DEN UYL'S REMARKS AS POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT.

5. WE ARE INCLINED TO AGREE WITH ADMIRAL BINNENDIJK THAT
STATE SECRETARY FOR DEFENSE STEMERDINK'S VISIT TO US HAS HELPED
EVOLUTION OF DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING AWACS. WE DOUBT, ON THE
OTHER HAND, THAT RECENT SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL MEETING
IN AMSTERDAM HAS HAD ANY DIREET IMPACT. ITS REAL SIGNIFICANCE
ON DUTCH POLITICS IS THAT IT HAS GIVEN MODERATE LABOR CABINET
MINISTERS SOME ADDITIONAL BACKING IN THEIR CONTINUING BATTLE
WITH PARTY BACK-BENCHERS AND LEFT-WING ACTIVISTS WHO ARGUE IN
FAVOR OF DEFENSE REDUCTIONS (THE HAGUE 6318 DTG 121549Z
NOV 76).

6. ALTHOUGHDEVELOPMENTS ON AWACS AT THE MOMENT ARE GENERALLY
POSITIVE, WE WOULD CAUTION AGAINST COUNTING ON AN EARLY DUTCH
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DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN PURCHASE OR OPERATIONAL PHASE OF
AWACS. DESPITE SOME FAVORABLE FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENTS, GON
IS FAR FROM READY TO EMBARK ON ANY SIGNIFICANT NEW DEFENSE
SPENDING PROGRAM. SHARP COST ESCALATION IN THE HARPOON CASE
REMAINS VIVID TO DEFENSE EXPERTS. FURTHERMORE, WITH NATIONAL
ELECTIONS SET FOR MAY 1977, MAJOR DECISIONS ON THE MAGNITUDE
OF AWACS ARE LIKELY TOBE POSTPONED FOR A FUTURE GOVERNMENT
TO HANDLE.

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